



# **Department of Commerce Safety Report**

**July 2003**

## **Introduction**

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for July 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in July 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for June 2003, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the June results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

## **Section One: Program Initiatives**

While some people believe that unsafe conditions cause most workplace accidents, over eighty percent of occupational injuries are caused by unsafe behavior. Within the Department, these types of injuries are caused by failure to wear personal protective equipment, walking through barricaded areas, standing on chairs to reach items, using ladders improperly, removing safety guards on equipment, and other such unsafe behaviors. Studies have shown that modifying safety behavior can reduce accidents up to 50 percent. Establishing a culture where employees are recognized for practicing safe behavior will reduce injuries, enhance morale, and increase productivity. In private industry, many firms have found that verbal and/or written praise can have a significant and long lasting affect in promoting safe behavior. To determine which employees practiced safe behavior, supervisors observe workers at random times and record their observations. During weekly safety meetings the supervisors discuss their findings and identify which employees were observed following safe work practices. Some companies present employees with certificates, some with cash awards, and others with paid time off.

Within the Department there are a number of options available for managers and supervisors to recognize safe behavior and other safety conduct. Typically, these awards take the form of either Special Act Awards, Cash-in-Your-Account Awards, On-the-Spot Awards, or Time Off Awards. For guidance on how to prepare an award recommendation, contact your servicing Human Resources Office. In addition, the Department's Office of Occupational Safety and Health is exploring options for establishing a Department-wide Safety Award Program.

## **Section Two: Significant Safety Issues**

At the July 2003 Commerce Safety Council meeting Deputy Secretary Bodman emphasized the importance of conducting a proactive safety program and conveying to our colleagues that safety is a team effort. He also stressed that the prevention of accidents is essential in reducing injuries and we should be mindful of safety in the conduct of our daily activities. Each month as we

review the Department's accidents and injuries, we see incidents which likely could have been prevented if sufficient thought and planning had been taken prior to beginning the task. A variety of factors contribute to each accident, which include failure to adhere to established rules, worker's attitudes towards safety, insufficient training, taking risks, inadequate supervision, unsafe conditions, and other factors. To achieve permanent safety performance improvement all employees, supervisors and managers must be committed to motivating people to follow safe practices and preventing accidents. We encourage all employees to be proactive in these efforts. If you observe unsafe behavior, or unsafe working conditions, take prompt action to resolve these situations. We all have a stake in preventing accidents, and as a team we can reduce accidents and the consequences which accompany them.

### Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information below reflects June 2003 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

**Incidence Rate:** The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH}(200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year <sup>1</sup>
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

<sup>1</sup> The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable to industry trends, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

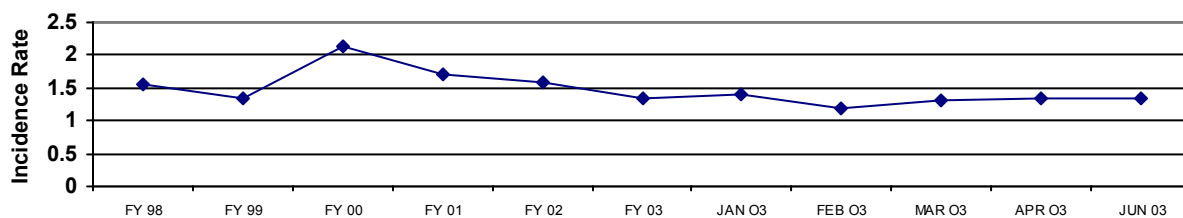
**NOTE: Previous reports used total injury rates to analyze injury trends. However, as**

employee awareness increases, as it has at Commerce, and employees are encouraged to report all injuries, rates tend to increase despite improvements in safety. That can occur, because employees are encouraged to report injuries that would not have been reported previously. In that event, injury rates can be deceiving. Therefore, this and subsequent reports will use recordable injury rates to compare injury rates.

Table 1, included as page eight of this report, provides data that more closely correspond to the recordable injury criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

**Chart 1**

**Total Case Incidence Rate Trend**



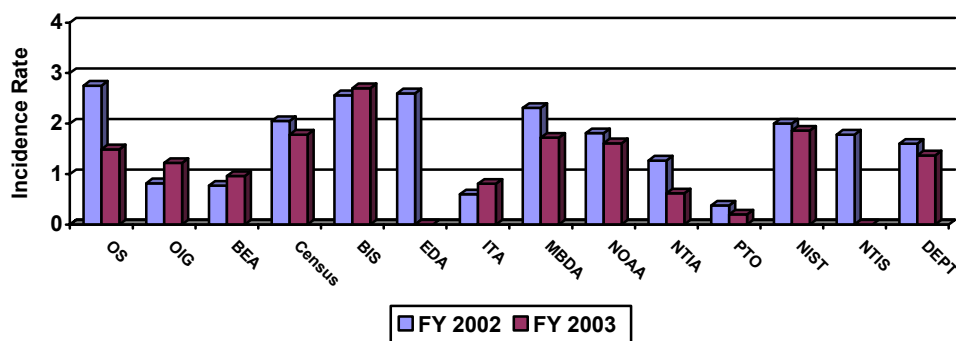
Major Findings include:

- **The FY 2003 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) for Commerce is the same as the rate for FY 2002, and is down from FY 2001.** The TCIR through June is 1.84 for FY 2003, 1.84 for FY 2002, and 1.98 for FY 2001. Several exposure injuries were reported from cleaning activities at the Census building in Hagerstown, Maryland. A total of 472 Workers' Compensation claims were submitted thus far for FY 2003.
- **Of the larger bureaus, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Bureau of the Census have higher TCIRs through June for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002 (see table 1 and chart 2).** NIST has seen a rash of injuries recently, from cuts, slips and falls, and exertion. Also, a number of the recent injuries occurred at the Bureau of the Census, with several illnesses resulting from exposure to vapors from a cleaning agent.
- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Economic Development Administration (EDA), the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), and the National Technical Information Service have significantly lower TCIRs through June for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002.**

The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is down from previous years.

The TRCIRs for Commerce are 1.35 for FY 2003, 1.60 in FY 2002, and 1.72 in FY 2001.

Chart 2



**Types of Injuries:** Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 3 and 4, and tables 2 and 2A.

Key findings are explained below:

- **“Slips/Falls” continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** “Slips/falls” accounted for 36 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2002 and for 26 percent in June 2003. More attention must be given to walking surfaces to reduce injuries from slips and falls. Floors that are wet from mopping must have highly visible warning signs, so employees know to avoid those areas. Trips from cords strung across floors continue to cause injuries. Telephone lines, electrical cords, and other cords should be routed away from walking areas.
- **“Struck and Contact” injuries were second in frequency for June 2003.** These injuries combined for 21 percent of those reported for FY 2002 and for 24 percent in June 2003. A majority of the injuries were caused when employees struck open drawers, doors, or low overhead clearances. Those injuries can be avoided by closing drawers that are not being used. Employees should also be aware of their surroundings and use caution. Low overhead clearances should be marked with highly visible paint or tape.
- **“Exertion” injuries remain a concern.** “Exertion” injuries were 20 percent and

26 percent of total injuries for FY 2002 and June 2003, respectively. To prevent back injuries, employees should use carts to move objects and avoid carrying them by hand. The proper lifting technique includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. For jobs that require repetitive motion, an ergonomics assessment should be conducted.

- **“Exposures” were evident as well.** Exposures accounted for five percent of the injuries or illnesses reported in FY 2002. One exposure injury was reported for June 2003. Most exposure illnesses can be prevented through proper ventilation and use of personal protective equipment.

**Chart 3**  
**Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for**  
**FY 2002**

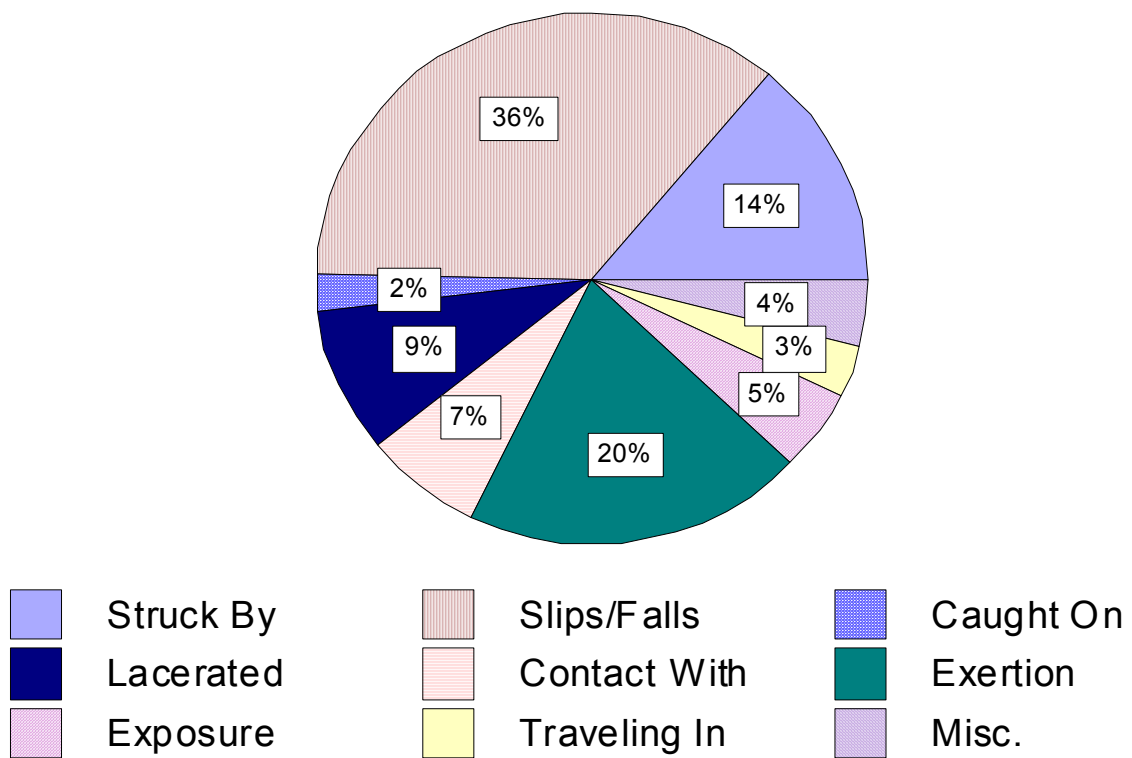
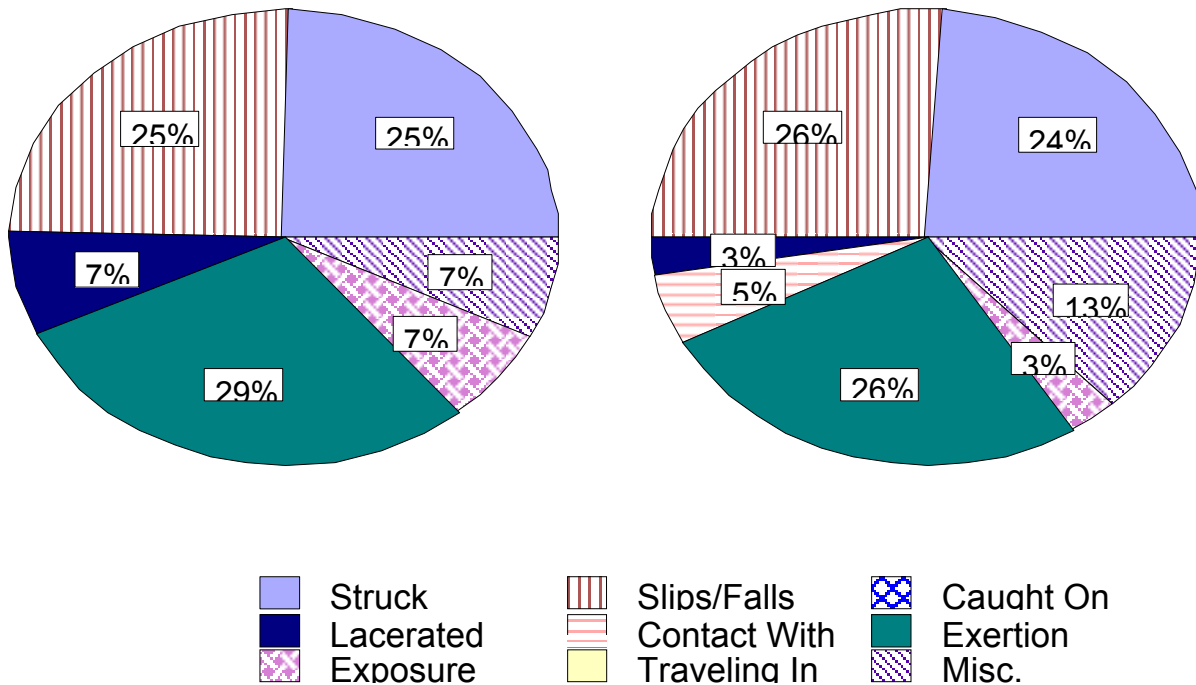


Chart 4

# Iniury Type As Percentage Of Total

MAY 2003

JUNE 2003





**TABLE 1**  
**TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE**

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		May 2003		June 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	2	2.99	1	1.48	9	1.48
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	1	1.09
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.75	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	1	2.57	0	0	4	1.11
Bureau of the Census	282	1.34	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	19	2.33	10	1.22	186	2.52
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.02	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	1	3.60	0	0	6	2.38
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	1	0.59
International Trade Administration	26	1.33	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	0	0	1	0.72	10	0.80
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	1	13.75	1	13.89	3	4.63
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	17	1.81	20	2.13	174	2.06
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	0	0	0	0	1	0.55
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.73	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	0	0	0	0	8	0.18
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.70
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.57	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	4	1.65	5	2.07	68	3.12
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>1.73</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>1.48</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1.58</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>472</b>	<b>1.84</b>
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

- Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.
- Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

**TABLE 1A**  
**TOTAL RECORDABLE CASE INCIDENCE RATE\***

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		May 2003		June 2003		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	2	2.99	0	0	8	1.32
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	1	1.09
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.53	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	1	2.57	0	0	3	0.83
Bureau of the Census	244	1.15	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	17	2.08	10	1.22	130	1.76
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.42	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	1	3.60	0	0	6	2.38
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.23	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	0	0	1	0.72	10	0.80
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	1	13.89	2	3.09
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.34	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	11	1.17	15	1.59	137	1.62
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	0	0	0	0	1	0.55
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.67	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	0	0	0	0	8	0.18
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3.70
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	2.96	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	3	1.24	3	1.24	39	1.79
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>2.13</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>1.72</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>1.60</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1.23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>1.05</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>1.35</b>
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

- The Total Recordable Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.

**Table 2**  
**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU**  
**AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES**  
**(Through June 2003)**

BUREAU	NOAA			CENSUS			NIST			PTO			ITA			OS			TOTAL
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	24	29	38	56	27	27	16	8	17	6	4	4	1	1	3	5	2	2	270
Falls/Slips	72	59	48	153	96	77	19	22	20	13	7	2	5	7	5	10	2	2	619
Caught On An Object	4	5	9	9	8	3	1	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	52
Cuts/Bites	20	26	4	36	19	13	12	9	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	147
Contact With An Object	13	19	4	24	11	4	1	6	0	6	6	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	100
Exertion/ Motion	64	64	55	54	37	41	7	17	15	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	4	370
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	9	5	7	6	13	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	12	0	83
Traveling In Car/Metro/Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	7	11	8	21	8	1	8	6	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	77
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1761</b>

\* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke. \*\* Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

**Table 2A**

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU  
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES  
(Through June 2003)**

BUREAU	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	15
Falls/Slips	2	0	1	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	2	6	0	1	37
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	7
Exertion/Motion	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	3	12
Exposure to Chemicals/Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>81</b>

\* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke

## Section Four: Survey Results

We continue to receive comments through the Safety Survey Web Site. We are using employee comments to help shape a safety program responsive to employee issues and concerns. The Web Site can be accessed through the Office of Human Resources Management Homepage at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/>.

### *Safety Survey Statistics*

We received three responses through the Web Site survey during June. The following tables provide some data regarding the distribution of responses by bureau and general geographical area, as well as general safety impressions.

#### **Safety Survey Results July Statistical Analysis**

**Have you experienced a safety lapse in your work area during the past 3 months?**

Answer	Count	Percent
No	2	66.67%
Yes	1	33.33%

**Have you noticed any safety improvements in your work area or in the Department as a whole during the past 3 months?**

Answer	Count	Percent
Yes	3	100.00%

#### **Bureau Breakdown**

Answer	Count	Percent
CENSUS	1	33.33%
EDA	1	33.33%
NOAA	1	33.33%

#### **Geographical Location**

Answer	Count	Percent
DC	1	33.33%
IN	1	33.33%
OR	1	33.33%